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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 4 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the United Nations, and has the honour to inform the latter that the Government of the Republic of Korea has decided to present its candidature for the United Nations Human Rights Council at the elections to be held on 9 May 2006.

The Republic of Korea attaches the utmost importance to the advancement of human rights as a fundamental universal value. Along with consistent efforts towards enhancing human rights standards at the domestic level, the Republic of Korea is firmly committed to contributing to the promotion and protection of human rights around the world.

As an active member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights since 1993, the Republic of Korea welcomes the launch of the Human Rights Council and hopes to continue to play a constructive role in the advancement of human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as in the establishment and development of the Council in accordance with the high expectations that the Member States of the United Nations place upon its noble mission.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 4 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

Republic of Korea: voluntary pledges and commitments on human rights

I. Background

The Government of the Republic of Korea (ROK) places great importance on human rights as a universally shared value steadfastly advocated by the United Nations for six decades. The promotion and protection of human rights is a priority in the ROK's national as well as foreign policy goals.

Having been inspired by the UN's commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout its own process of democratization and economic development, the Republic of Korea attests to the imperative of human rights in the betterment of societies. The Government is making every effort to achieve continued improvements in the human rights situation within the Republic of Korea. It also endeavors to spread democracy and human rights worldwide.

The ROK is a signatory to the following six major human rights treaties, and to most of their Optional Protocols, regularly submitting reports on their implementation :

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1990)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1990)
* First Optional Protocol to ICCPR (1990)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1985)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1979)
- Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1979)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991)
* Optional Protocol on the involvement of Children in armed conflict (1994)
* Optional Protocol on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (1994)

Since its entry into the UN in 1991, the Republic of Korea has been actively involved in the work of the key human rights organizations of the United Nations. It has been a member of the Commission on Human Rights since 1993. It has also contributed to a wide range of discussions and programs for the promotion

of all aspects of human rights, including the recent discussion for the creation of the Human Rights Council (HRC).

Furthermore, in the conviction that human rights is best served by democracy and democratic governance, it has played a leading role in the formation of the Community of Democracies (CD). It has subsequently played a key role in the work of the CD as a member of the Convening Group (CG).

In the Republic of Korea, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) was established in November 2001 with the mandate to investigate and remedy human rights violations, to provide education and raise public awareness in the field of human rights, to conduct research, and to recommend legislative, institutional, or policy initiatives relating to human rights. The Commission has become a vital force for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Republic of Korea. In particular, in January 2006 it put forward its own proposal for a "National Human Rights Plan of Action (NAP)" for the period 2007-2011 to serve as a guideline for a comprehensive national plan for the advancement of human rights.

The Government of the ROK recently adopted legal amendments to ensure the advancement of human rights in a wide array of fields. These include gender equality (the abolishment of the male-dominated family registry system), labor rights (revisions of the labor law allowing teachers and public servants to engage in union-related political activities), judicial parity for the rights of victims as well as suspects in criminal cases, and non-discriminatory measures for foreign nationals.

II. Pledges and Commitments

In line with its dedication to the noble aim of the promotion and protection of human rights, the Republic of Korea commits itself :

To further advance human rights at the national level :

1. By taking the following steps with respect to the withdrawal of reservations made to and the ratification of the UN human rights instruments in accordance with the recent advancement of human rights in the ROK including legal amendments and institutional developments in a wide array of fields :

   - promptly acceding to the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention ;
   - examining the withdrawal of its reservations made to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (14-5), the UN

Convention against Torture (21 and 22) as well as to the CEDAW Convention (16-1-g) in the near future ;
- considering the accession of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture in the near future.

2. By considering the ratification of the following 4 out of the 8 ILO Fundamental Conventions by 2008 :

   - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention (No.87)
   - Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention (No.98)
   - Forced Labour Convention (No.29)
   - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No.105)

3. By setting, in accordance with the recommendation of the UN, the 'National Action Plan on Human Rights (NAP)' for 2007-2011*, which is expected to be completed at the end of the year 2006. The NAP, a blueprint for human rights policy, will set out guidelines for the advancement of human rights in a comprehensive and forward-looking manner.

   * The major aim of the NAP 2007-2011 is to propose institutional provisions to protect the socially vulnerable and minorities, and to draw up laws and institutions to build a strong basis for political, economic, social and cultural rights.

4. By enhancing cooperation and partnership with civil society in ensuring the protection of human rights and good governance in the process of the formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policy.

5. By strengthening human rights education to enhance public awareness and thereby incorporate human rights into the mainstream in all sectors of society.

To further contribute to the advancement of human rights at the international level :

1. By supporting member states in their implementation of human rights obligations with technical cooperation as well as encouraging states to become parties to the core human rights treaties.

2. By offering cooperation at the bilateral level as well as through the UN system for the strengthening of democracy, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

3. By contributing to ongoing work aimed at improving the international human rights framework, such as reform of the treaty body system and the work of the OHCHR.

4. By cooperating fully with the treaty monitoring bodies, including through the timely submission of periodic reports, and acting promptly and in good faith on their concluding observations and recommendations.

5. By participating actively in ongoing discussions for the establishment of new international human rights instruments such as the work of the *Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities*.

6. By promoting intra-and cross- regional democratic progress and cooperation such as by providing technical expertise and offering full cooperation to countries requesting assistance in building democratic institutions within the framework of the Community of Democracies (CD).

7. By participating actively in the discussions for the creation of regional and sub-regional machinery for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Asia-Pacific region where such mechanisms are absent.

8. By contributing to the process of identifying and clarifying standards with regard to new human rights issues such as those in bioethics and information technology.

To contribute to the work of the Human Rights Council :

1. By actively taking part, in the spirit of dialogue and cooperation, in the launching of the new Council and the ensuing discussions on its working methods with a view to making it open, transparent, productive and functional, so that it may meet the needs and expectations of member states.

2. By doing its share to enable the Council to respond promptly and effectively to human rights abuses.

3. By demonstrating a strong commitment to the realization of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights with the same emphasis on each and on an equal footing.